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NO BUSINESS FOR GOVERNMENT

CPYRIGHT *Ransom to Castro*

The government of the United States should not help to pay the ransom Castro demands for the release of 1,100-odd Cubans captured in the invasion 18 months ago.

It has not said it will. But it has not declared it won't. White House, State, Justice and the CIA are all silent to inquiries seeking the truth about reports the administration may put up contingency funds to supple-

ment the ransom price the exiles organization is trying to meet.

Castro wants \$62 million. The exiles have got together about \$17 million. Current Havana negotiations between Castro and New York attorney James Donovan, for the exiles, are reported to be aimed at an agreement that the balance should be made good by handing Castro food and drugs the Russians are slow at providing.

If the government is in fact involved it may be silent because (1) it does not want to up the ante Castro would certainly force if he thought his sticky fingers could reach into Washington's coffers, (2) it wants to emphasize the humanitarianism of individual Americans willing—whatever political propaganda Castro may make of it—to put up cash to redeem the lot of men for whom they feel some responsibility, (3) it can't be caught publicly in any under-the-counter hanky-panky with a regime it has ostracized and which it asks allies to shun.

A fourth consideration, of course, is that Mr. Kennedy wouldn't want to handle the hot political potato of appearing to play ball with Castro on an election eve. Though, of course, in New York state it would do no harm to Mr. Donovan, fighting an uphill battle against Republican Senator Javits, if he could pull off a release so close to the emotions of many voters.

The parallel of the current projected deal with the Tractors-for-Freedom plan that failed last year is exact. At that time, Mr. Kennedy said this nation "cannot be a party to any deal with Castro." He was right then, and nothing has changed. At that time, he urged individual Americans to contribute to the tractors fund. No one except those without an ounce of compassion could cavil at that.

But Mr. Kennedy did not then, and should not now, ease his conscience—the responsibility he must still feel is partly his and that of his predecessor—out of public funds. It is one of the penalties of high office that the decisions they make they

If American pharmaceutical firms want to cut prices to help the fund organizers, well and good. If any American wants to put up dollars to get men back into exile where, maybe, they can fight again, so be it. Whatever is paid is to meet a blackmail price. But there can be exceptions to a hard set principle when there is no personal benefit sought, when the deed is done for others unknown to the donor by name but not in spirit.

This nation, however, must not be a party to a deal with a regime it won't otherwise touch with a 10-foot pole.